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ART. II.—1. *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron, from the Year* 1808 *to the End of* 1814. By the late R. C. DALLAS, Esq. 8vo. Philadelphia. A. Small, and Carey and Lea. 1825.

2. *Correspondence of Lord Byron with a Friend; including his Letters to his Mother; in* 1809, 1810, *and* 1811. 12mo. Philadelphia. Carey and Lea. 1825.

3. *Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron; noted during a Residence with his Lordship at Pisa, in the Years* 1821 *and* 1822. By THOMAS MEDWIN, Esq. of the 24th Light Dragoons. 12mo. New York. 1824.

THERE are few individuals who, during the age in which they lived, have excited stronger interest than Lord Byron. His character and writings are a subject well worthy of attention. On the former, some light is thrown by the publications, which have appeared since his death.

Among these, Mr Dallas' Recollections, though the work of a weak and vain man, has a certain degree of value. It illustrates the history of Lord Byron's character. Mr Dallas, who was an author by profession, has been known principally as the writer of some indifferent novels, and the translator of Bertrand de Moleville's Annals of the French Revolution. He was connected with the family of the Byrons; his sister having been married to an uncle of the poet. His acquaintance with Lord Byron, however, commenced after the latter had published his juvenile poems, entitled Hours of Idleness. Upon this occasion, Mr Dallas addressed a letter to him, saying that 'he felt irresistibly impelled to pay him a tribute, on the effusions of a noble mind in strains so truly poetic.' Having commenced in this manner, he continued to administer his admiration liberally, at a time, when such admiration was of more value to Lord Byron, than it afterwards became. The acquaintance strengthened; and Mr Dallas superintended the publication of the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers; and of the first two cantos of Childe Harold; acting, at once, as critic and corrector of the press. For these and for other services, he was rewarded, but not, as he thought, repaid

by the copyright of several of Lord Byron's publications. Their friendship, however, was not formed to last, and was broken off long before the death of Lord Byron.

Captain Medwin's intimacy with Lord Byron commenced at a late period in the life of the latter, when he had not an extensive choice of associates. The authenticity of his book has been controverted. Mr Murray, Lord Byron's publisher, has proved, that much of the conversation, reported to have passed respecting himself, is incorrect and injurious. Still the question arises, whether this want of correctness is to be charged upon Lord Byron or Captain Medwin ; and there seems to be no satisfactory ground for deciding against the latter. Inaccuracies of statement, likewise, have been pointed out by a writer in a late number of the Westminster Review, supposed to be Lord Byron's friend, Mr Hobhouse. As to some of them, there may be a doubt, as in the former case, which of the two individuals concerned is responsible. For others, however, Captain Medwin must be regarded as solely accountable. The article, which has been referred to, proves that he has not always been careful in the statement of facts, that he has committed some blunders ;* and, perhaps, that he has sometimes ascribed to Lord Byron, rather what he might have said, than what he did say. But, on the whole, this attack upon Captain Medwin's book may serve rather to confirm than to weaken one's belief in its general credibility. With an evident perception on the part of the writer, that its statements are not honorable to Lord Byron, and a strong inclination to detect mistakes, still little is disproved or contradicted, which would much affect our estimate of Lord Byron's character, or even manners. No motive is assigned by the reviewer, to explain why the author should have reported the conversation of Lord Byron falsely ; except one, a desire to appear more intimate with him, than he really was. The accounts of Medwin correspond to the

* Captain Medwin represents Byron as saying that the words, '*Thou tremblest*'—'*'Tis with age then,*' which occur in his Marino Faliero, 'were taken from the Old Bailey proceedings. Some judge observed to the witness, "Thou tremblest"—"'Tis with cold then," was the reply.'

'Who does not know,' asks his reviewer, 'that this famous speech, which the Conversation writer made his Lord Byron say, was made in the Old Bailey, was uttered by Bailly, the mayor of Paris, on his way to the scaffold. That the real Lord Byron should make so ludicrous a blunder is morally impossible.' Lord Byron refers to the reply of Bailly in his note on the passage

impression, which Byron has given of himself by his writings, and by the notorious facts in his life. His conversation, as reported by the former, is in general such as one might suppose it would be. The style of expression corresponds with that of his prose writings. The remarks upon almost all subjects, even those of mere literature, are superficial; the result of unsettled principles of judgment and taste. The temper discovered is characteristic. He is represented as talking much of himself and his works; as full of spleen toward others, especially those who had been most nearly allied to him, and as hardly concealing his contempt for his few remaining associates, such as Shelley, 'the snake,' as he was pleased to call him, and Leigh Hunt, 'the author of Nimini Pimini, and Follyage,' titles which he applied to his poems. He appears as a thorough libertine, devoid of all the proper feelings of a man, toward his wife, his mother, and it may be added, for the case is glaring, toward the degraded females with whom he had been connected. He seems to have regarded woman, only as an object of sensuality and insult. The same character is obvious in some of his later writings.

Supposing, however, Lord Byron's conversation to be, in general, correctly reported in this book, still it is questionable how far his statements are to be depended upon. Captain Medwin's visits were frequently, as he says, at 11 o'clock in the evening; and considering the accounts which he gives of Lord Byron's habits of life, the latter could not always, at that hour, be expected to recollect or to state facts with great accuracy. The general air of his conversation, as reported, may lead one to suspect, likewise, that his vanity sometimes betrayed him into extravagancies. Disposed, therefore, as one may be, from the present state of the evidence, to regard the book as, in the main, a credible narrative of Lord Byron's conversations; yet on account of the probable inaccuracies both of the speaker and the reporter, it is to be appealed to with caution; but with proper caution some use may be made of it.

The conversations reported by Medwin, took place during two of the last years of Lord Byron's life. But in the degradation into which he fell, when he had become the author of Cain and Don Juan, we must not forget his extraordinary

powers. At that period, 'all that gives gloss to sin had passed away,'

> 'And rooted stood in manhood's hour,
> The weeds of vice without the flower.'

The moral change between youth and middle age was perhaps only such, as might have been anticipated; but there were seasons in his life, when the passions and vices, which at last completed their work of ruin, seem to have lost something of their force; and the evil spirit, of which he was the prey, seems to have been driven off, by the strong action of his genius and his better nature. He had the power, beyond almost any other poet, of uttering deep tones of feeling, which dwelt upon the mind, and called forth strong sympathy, even when connected with a perverted ostentation of lamentable defects of character. His life, too, forms a melancholy story, melancholy enough in reality, without our being deceived by the affectation of wretchedness, which he assumed for the purpose of poetical display. He was unfortunate in the moral influences which operated upon his character. Much of compassion, therefore, some lingerings of sympathy, and admiration for his genius, though his intellectual powers were great only within a limited sphere, mingle with the reprobation, with which his life and writings must on the whole be regarded. At one period of his course, an observer, ignorant of the evil to which he had been exposed, might have applied to him the lines of his favorite poet—

> 'Blest with each gift of nature and of art,
> And wanting nothing but an honest heart.'

With more kindness, however, and, perhaps, more justice, one might have ascribed to him a character, which he himself has drawn, as that of his Manfred.

> This should have been a noble creature; he
> Hath all the energy which would have made
> A goodly frame of glorious elements,
> Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
> It is an awful chaos—light and darkness—
> And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts,
> Mixed, and contending without end or order,
> All dormant or destructive.

Lord Byron's father, who was notorious for his profligacy, died while his son was a child. The marriage of his father with his mother was preceded by an elopement, and appears to have alienated the families of both parties. It was, as may be supposed, an unhappy one. His mother, in whose care he was left, appears to have been unfit to form or influence his character in a proper manner. He is represented by Medwin, as speaking of her without feeling or reserve; and his letters to her discover little tenderness or respect. This is the more remarkable, as his mother and himself seem to have been almost alone in the world. According to Dallas, they were, during his youth, neglected by his other relations.

At the university he fell, according to every account, including his own, into a course of reckless profligacy. The following is an extract from his reply to Mr Dallas' first letter, written in his twentieth year.

'My pretensions to virtue are unluckily so few, that though I should be happy to merit, I cannot accept, your applause in that respect. One passage in your letter struck me forcibly; you mention the two Lords Lyttleton in the manner they respectively deserve, and will be surprised to hear the person, who is now addressing you, has been frequently compared to the *latter*. I know I am injuring myself in your esteem by this avowal, but the circumstance was so remarkable from your observation, that I cannot help relating the fact. The events of my short life have been of so singular a nature, that, though the pride commonly called honor has, and I trust ever will, prevent me from disgracing my name by a mean or cowardly action, I have been already held up as the votary of licentiousness, and the disciple of infidelity. How far justice may have dictated this accusation I cannot pretend to say, but, like the *gentleman* to whom my religious friends, in the warmth of their charity, have already devoted me, I am made worse than I really am.' pp. 7, 8.

The following is from a subsequent letter to Mr Dallas.

'I once thought myself a philosopher, and talked nonsense with great decorum; I defied pain, and preached up equanimity. For some time this did very well, for no one was in *pain* for me but my friends, and none lost their patience but my hearers. At last, a fall from my horse convinced me that bodily suffering was an evil; and the worst of an argument overset my maxims and my

temper at the same moment, so I quitted Zeno for Aristippus, and conceive that pleasure constitutes the το καλον. In morality, I prefer Confucius to the Ten Commandments, and Socrates to St Paul, though the two latter agree in their opinion of marriage. In religion I favor the Catholic emancipation, but do not acknowledge the pope; and I have refused to take the sacrament, because I do not think eating bread or drinking wine from the hand of an earthly vicar will make me an inheritor of heaven. I hold virtue in general, or the virtues severally, to be only in the disposition, each a *feeling*, not a principle. I believe truth the prime attribute of the Deity; and death an eternal sleep, at least of the body. You have here a brief compendium of the sentiments of the *wicked* George Lord Byron; and, till I get a new suit, you will perceive I am badly clothed.' pp. 13, 14.

While at the university, he became intimate with one, whom he thus celebrates in the concluding note to the first canto of Childe Harold.

'I should have ventured a verse to the memory of the late Charles Skinner Matthews, Fellow of Downing College, Cambridge, were he not too much above all praise of mine. His powers of mind, shown in the attainment of greater honors, against the ablest candidates, than those of any graduate on record at Cambridge, have sufficiently established his fame on the spot where it was acquired, while his softer qualities live in the recollection of friends, who loved him too well to envy his superiority.' p. 196.

Of Mr Matthews, however, he speaks in the following terms in a letter to Mr Dallas.

'You did not know M**; he was a man of the most astonishing powers, as he sufficiently proved at Cambridge, by carrying off more prizes and fellowships, against the ablest candidates, than any other graduate on record; but a most decided atheist, indeed noxiously so, for he proclaimed his principles in all societies.' p. 143.

Lord Byron early experienced some of those consequences, which a mind of much feeling, and of much compass of thought, must suffer from the opinions he had adopted, and the course of conduct he pursued; satiety, loathing of the world, remorse, and misanthropy. He formed friendships with the worthless, and finding them worthless, in his disappointment and despite, he denied the existence of all disinterested

feeling. His most craving passion was the desire of fixing upon himself the admiration and sympathy, or at least the wonder and gaze of men. He was desirous of possessing some extraordinary distinction, which should separate him from all others, as one entitled to peculiar regard. He wished to exhibit himself as standing alone, 'among men, but not of them;'

> '———In a shroud of thoughts,
> Which were not their thoughts.'

But this is a passion, the most irritating, and the most liable to disappointment. Its natural tendency is to misanthropy. He, whom it possesses, is led to look upon those around him, as selfish, low minded, cold and unjust; because they do not view him as an object of particular interest. He is utterly discontented with that small portion, which most of us can fairly claim, of the general regard of others; of the regard of any, except those few, whom we may have attached to us by virtue, kindness, and equal returns of sympathy. He feels, as if he were defrauded of his rights by his fellowmen, when they suffer him to remain unnoticed. The strong workings of this passion at last made Byron a poet; and a poet, whose principal subject, presented either with or without disguise, was himself. The passion attained its object; but not its gratification, for that is impossible. Byron had, at last, few rivals in fame, and was as miserable, and more degraded than before.

While yet at the university, at the age of nineteen, he published his first volume of poems. There is much in them which shows an unformed mind, an unpractised hand, and a want of good taste. But, considering the age at which they were written, they are uncommon productions. To say the least, and that is saying but little, they are as good as three quarters of the verses, to be found in those monumental depositories, called bodies of English poetry. What is most remarkable, with but a few exceptions, they discover little of that peculiar moral character, and of those dark feelings, which afterward were among the most striking characteristics of his poetry. They express, for the most part, common sentiments and affections. Several of them are addressed to youthful friends, and written with much appear-

ance of feeling. The volume, in general, hardly connects itself with the subsequent exhibitions of his mind. We will give a few extracts, not so much for the sake of the poetry, as to illustrate the poetical character, in which Byron, at this time, wished to appear, corresponding, probably, in a considerable degree, to the yet unfixed state of his real character.

Oh! yes, I will own we were dear to each other,
The friendships of childhood, though fleeting, are true;
The love, which you felt, was the love of a brother,
Nor less the affection I cherish'd for you.

But Friendship can vary her gentle dominion,
The attachment of years, in a moment, expires;
Like Love, too, she moves on a swift waving pinion,
But glows not, like Love, with unquenchable fires.

Full oft have we wander'd through Ida together,
And blest were the scenes of our youth, I allow;
In the spring of our life, how serene is the weather!
But winter's rude tempests are gathering now.

No more with Affection shall Memory blending
The wonted delights of our childhood retrace;
When Pride steels the bosom, the heart is unbending,
And what would be Justice, appears a disgrace.

However, dear S——, for I still must esteem you,
The few, whom I love, I can never upbraid,
The chance, which has lost, may in future redeem you,
Repentance will cancel the vow you have made.

I will not complain, and though chill'd is affection,
With me no corroding resentment shall live;
My bosom is calmed by the simple reflection,
That both may be wrong, and that both should forgive.

You knew, that my soul, that my heart, my existence,
If danger demanded were wholly your own;
You knew me unalter'd, by years or by distance,
Devoted to love and to friendship alone.

You knew,——but away with the vain retrospection,
The bond of affection no longer endures;
Too late you may droop o'er the fond recollection,
And sigh for the friend who was formerly yours.

For the present, we part,—I will hope not forever,
For time and regret will restore you at last;
To forget our dissension we both should endeavor,
I ask no atonement, but days like the past.

What follows are the concluding verses of a poem addressed to the Earl of ——.

Not for a moment may you stray
From Truth's secure, unerring way,
May no delights decoy;
O'er roses may your footsteps move,
Your smiles be ever smiles of love,
Your tears be tears of joy.

Oh! if you wish, that happiness
Your coming days and years may bless,
And virtues crown your brow;
Be, still, as you were wont to be,
Spotless as you 've been known to me,
Be, still, as you are now.

And though some trifling share of praise,
To cheer my last declining days,
To me were doubly dear;
Whilst blessing your beloved name,
I'd *wave* at once a *poet's* fame,
To *prove* a *prophet here.*

The next extract is from a poem to E. N. L. Esq.

Though Youth has flown on rosy pinion,
And Manhood claims his stern dominion,
Age will not every hope destroy,
But yield some hours of sober joy.

Yes, I will hope that Time's broad wing,
Will shed around some dews of spring;
But, if his scythe must sweep the flowers,
Which bloom among the fairy bowers,
Where smiling youth delights to dwell,
And hearts with early rapture swell;
If frowning Age, with cold control,
Confines the current of the soul,
Congeals the tear of Pity's eye,
Or checks the sympathetic sigh,

Or hears, unmov'd, Misfortune's groan,
And bids me feel for self alone;
Oh! may my bosom never learn,
To sooth its wonted heedless flow,
Still, still despise the censor stern,
But ne'er forget another's wo.
Yes, as you knew me in the days,
O'er which Remembrance yet delays,
Still may I rove, untutor'd, wild,
And even in age, at heart a child.

Other similar passages might be quoted. But with all this occasional difference of feeling, there are breakings forth of the same spirit, which afterwards displayed itself; and it is remarkable that where these appear, the expression becomes more energetic.

Few are my years, and, yet I feel
The world was ne'er design'd for me;
Ah! why do darkening shades conceal
The hour when man must cease to be?
Once I beheld a splendid dream,
A visionary scene of bliss;
Truth!—wherefore did thy hated beam
Awake me to a world like this?

I lov'd—but those I lov'd are gone;
Had friends—my early friends are fled:
How cheerless feels the heart alone,
When all its former hopes are dead!
Though gay companions, o'er the bowl,
Dispel awhile the sense of ill,
Though pleasure stirs the maddening soul,
The heart—the heart is lonely still.

How dull! to hear the voice of those,
Whom rank, or chance, whom wealth, or power,
Have made, though neither friends nor foes,
Associates of the festive hour!
Give me again, a faithful few,
In years and feelings still the same,
And I will fly the midnight crew,
Where boisterous joy is but a name.

One poem relates to a romantic story of an attachment, which he had felt, while a boy, to a lady considerably older than himself; and the disappointment of which he was fond of representing, as having had a very melancholy effect upon his morals and happiness. It is the same story to which he alludes in his 'Dream.' The following is from the poem first mentioned.

Ah! since thy angel form is gone,
My heart no more can rest with any;
But what it sought in thee alone,
Attempts, alas! to find in many.

Then, fare thee well, deceitful maid,
'Twere vain and fruitless to regret thee;
Nor Hope, nor Memory yield their aid,
But Pride may teach me to forget thee.

Yet all this giddy waste of years,
This tiresome round of palling pleasures,
These varied loves, these matrons' fears,
These thoughtless strains to passion's measures—

If thou wert mine, had all been hush'd;
This cheek, now pale from early riot,
With Passion's hectic ne'er had flush'd,
But bloom'd in calm domestic quiet.

Yes, once the rural scene was sweet,
For nature seem'd to smile before thee;
And once my breast abhorr'd deceit,
For then it beat but to adore thee.

But, now, I seek for other joys,
To think, would drive my soul to madness;
In thoughtless throngs, and empty noise,
I conquer half my bosom's sadness.

Yet, even in these, a thought will steal,
In spite of every vain endeavor;
And fiends might pity what I feel,
To know, that thou art lost forever.

The lady referred to in this poem, and in the 'Dream,' could not have been the same, whom he designated as

Thyrza; and in the one case or the other, therefore, he seems to have made an unnecessary demand upon public sympathy.

Upon the publication of his poems, they were reviewed in the Edinburgh Review, in that style of flippant, unfeeling, insulting criticism, which at one time contributed as much to the celebrity of that work, as the talent actually displayed in it; though since its novelty has passed away, it begins to be regarded in its true character, as equally offensive to right principles and good taste. The effect of such a review upon feelings like those of Byron, may be easily imagined. All his passions were thrown into commotion, and poured their gall through his mind. It, probably, had a far more important influence upon his future character, than the disappointed affection, which has just been referred to. It served to blast those feelings, by which he might have been allied to his fellowmen, and to render him the proud, insulated, unhappy being, which he subsequently became. It was administering poison to one in a fever. According to Medwin, he said respecting it,—

'When I first saw the review of my "Hours of Idleness," I was furious; in such a rage as I never have been since. I dined that day with Scrope Davies, and drank three bottles of claret to drown it; but it only boiled the more. That critique was a masterpiece of low wit, a tissue of scurrilous abuse. I remember there was a great deal of vulgar trash in it which was meant for humor, "about geople being thankful for what they could get"—"not looking a gift horse in the mouth," and such stable expressions.' p. 96.

For the wrong which he had suffered, Byron endeavored, in the first shock of his feelings, to revenge himself not merely upon the editor of the review and his associates, but upon almost all his contemporaries who had been more favored than himself in gaining praise as poets. He was sufficiently enraged 'to run a muck, and tilt at all he met.' He produced his 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' But his satire is violent, indiscriminating, and undignified. It is full of the coarse common places of abuse, with little range of thought or allusion. His blows are random and ineffectual. There is not much, which has even the appearance of being characteristic of the individuals whom he assails. His

epithets, and accessory ideas, have often no relation to his main purpose. His attack on Jeffrey, in which he might be expected to put forth his strength, is, we presume, commonly regarded as neither witty nor powerful. Let us take another short passage, which is a fair specimen of the poem.

> Next view in state, proud prancing on his roan,
> The golden crested haughty Marmion,
> Now forging scrolls, now foremost in the fight,
> Not quite a felon, yet but half a knight,
> The gibbet or the field prepar'd to grace;
> A mighty mixture of the great and base.
> And think'st thou, Scott! by vain conceit perchance,
> On public taste to foist thy stale romance,
> Though Murray with his Miller may combine
> To yield thy muse just half a crown per line?
> No! when the sons of song descend to trade,
> Their bays are sear, their former laurels fade.
> Let such forego the poet's sacred name,
> Who rack their brains for lucre, not for fame;
> Low may they sink to merited contempt,
> And scorn remunerate the mean attempt!
> Such be their meed, such still the just reward
> Of prostituted Muse and hireling bard!
> For this we spurn Apollo's venal son,
> And bid a long 'good night to Marmion.'
> These are the themes that claim our plaudits now,
> These are the bards to whom the Muse must bow;
> While Milton, Dryden, Pope, alike forgot,
> Resign their hallow'd bays to Walter Scott.

It requires no great exercise of generosity to forgive such an attack. Byron had not the qualifications of a satirist. He wanted wit, facility of allusion, and quick perception of character. He wanted truth, or its substitute, probability, and just principles of taste and moral judgment. In the latter part of his life, he attempted this style of writing again, and produced a poem, called the Age of Bronze, which hardly emerged into notice. On the whole, perhaps, it is better than his first effort; but how far he had improved by age, may be judged of in some degree by its conclusion.

> But, tired of foreign follies, I turn home,
> And sketch the group—the picture 's yet to come.

My Muse 'gan weep, but ere a tear was spilt,
She caught Sir William Curtis in a kilt!
While thronged the chiefs of every Highland clan
To hail their brother, Vich Ian Alderman!
Guildhall grows Gael, and echoes with Erse roar,
While all the common Council cry, 'Claymore!'
To see proud Albyn's Tartan's as a belt
Gird the gross sirloin of a City Celt,
She burst into a laughter so extreme,
That I awoke—and lo! it was *no* dream!

Here, reader, will we pause;—if there 's no harm in
This first—you 'll have, perhaps, a second 'Carmen.'

Byron, in his first satire, talks of treading 'the path which Pope and Gifford trod before.' The question, whether he be equal to Gifford, is not worth discussing; but his resemblance to Pope is that of a 'satyr,' butting with his horns, to 'Hyperion with his glittering shafts of war.' The verses of Pope are vivid with meaning. Single words open a view of a train of thoughts, or throw a flash of light upon some striking image. There is a consistency in his conceptions of character, and in all the figures and epithets by which they are emblazoned, which makes us feel a conviction at once of the sincerity of the writer, and of the correctness of his perceptions. This conviction is, for the most part, just, for Pope was a conscientious satirist, and proud of his adherence to truth;

'Truth guards the poet, sanctifies his line,
And makes immortal, verse as mean as mine.'

It has contributed to make his verses immortal; for in satire, our natural sentiments require justice. The characters of most of those, against whom he directed his wit or his indignation, remain fixed in the memories of men, as he has drawn them. No poem of the kind can be compared in vigor and effect with that in which he made a common slaughter of the low, profligate, but, some of them, noted and mischievous writers of his times—

Δεινη δε κλαγγη γενετ' αργυρεοιο βιοιο.*

Its great fault is the gross indecency of some passages; but

* Dreadful was the clang of the silver bow.

the age, in which Pope wrote, was not civilised, like the present, by the influence of female taste and literature.

Byron's suppression of his 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' was no loss to his reputation, and little favor to those whom he had made the objects of his satire; for his attacks were not of a kind to be felt or remembered even by them, except as mere intended insults or expressions of ill will. He himself, however, appears to have looked back upon the work with considerable satisfaction; and alludes to it repeatedly in that poem, in which he gave the last exhibition of his character. He was, professedly, a warm admirer of Pope; and, in the latter years of his life, defended his poetical merit against the attack of Bowles; but there is hardly more of philosophical criticism in his defence, than in the writings of his opponent. His admiration of Pope was natural; not merely from a perception of the real power of that poet, but also from the circumstance, that he stood alone in his age, enjoying that preeminent distinction, to possess which, in some form or another, was Byron's strongest passion. There was a rank granted to Pope, which has hardly, if at all, been conceded to any other writer. He was looked up to as the moral and literary censor of his age. We are, at first view, struck with passages in his poetry, as written in a tone of great assumption, but when we examine the history of his life and writings, we find that he assumed no more than was conceded.

But, whatever might be the intrinsic merit of the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' still, a satire well versified, the production of a young, profligate nobleman, and abounding in personality, would find many readers and admirers. It soon ran through three editions, to the last of which was annexed a postscript, which is curious as a specimen of Lord Byron's character and wit; that character about which so much sentiment has been lavished, and that wit which has been thought so spirited and entertaining. The postscript was evidently written in a state of elation from the success of his work. He says,

'I have been informed, since the present edition went to the press, that my trusty and well beloved cousins, the Edinburgh Reviewers, are preparing a most vehement critique on my poor, gen-

tle, *unresisting* Muse, whom they have already so bedeviled with their ungodly ribaldry.

"Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ."

'I suppose I must say of Jeffrey, as Sir Anthony Aguecheek saith; "An I had known he was so cunning of fence, I had seen him damned ere I had fought him." What a pity it is, that I shall be beyond the Bosphorus before the next number has passed the Tweed. But I yet hope to light my pipe with it in Persia.

'My northern friends have accused me, with justice, of personality towards their great literary Anthropophagus, Jeffrey; but what else was to be done with him and his dirty pack, who feed by 'lying and slandering,' and slake their thirst by 'evil speaking?' I have adduced facts already well known, and of Jeffrey's mind I have stated my free opinion, nor has he thence sustained any injury;—what scavenger was ever soiled by being pelted with mud? It may be said that I quit England because I have censured there, 'persons of honor and wit about town;' but I am coming back again, and their vengeance will keep hot till my return. Those who know me can testify, that my motives for leaving England are very different from fears, literary or personal; those who do not, may one day be convinced. Since the publication of this thing, my name has not been concealed; I have been mostly in London, ready to answer for my transgressions, and in daily expectation of sundry cartels; but, alas! "the age of chivalry is over," or, in the vulgar tongue, there is no spirit now-a-days.

'There is a youth ycleped Hewson Clarke, (subaudi, Esquire,) a sizer of Emmanuel college, and I believe a denizen of Berwick upon Tweed, whom I have introduced in these pages, to much better company than he has been accustomed to meet; he is, notwithstanding, a very sad dog, and for no reason, that I can discover, except a personal quarrel with a bear, kept by me at Cambridge, to sit for a fellowship, and whom the jealousy of his Trinity cotemporaries prevented from success, has been abusing me, and what is worse, the defenceless innocent abovementioned, in the Satirist, for one year and some months. I am utterly unconscious of having given him any provocation; indeed, I am guiltless of having heard his name till coupled with the Satirist. He has therefore no reason to complain, and I dare say that, like Sir Fretful Plagiary, he is rather *pleased* than otherwise. I have now mentioned all, who have done me the honor to notice me and mine, that is, my bear and my book, except the editor of the Satirist, who, it seems, is a gentleman, God wot! I wish he could impart a little of his gentility to his subordinate scribblers.'

All this Byron insisted upon publishing, though Mr Dallas, in an exercise of good sense and friendship, uncommon on his part, urged its suppression in the strongest terms.

The following passage, from Dallas' Recollections, relates to Lord Byron's character, feelings, and mode of life, about the period of which we are speaking.

'Very soon after this, the satire appeared in its new form, but too late for its author to enjoy his additional laurels before he left England. I was with him almost every day while he remained in London. Misanthropy, disgust of life, leading to scepticism and impiety, prevailed in his heart and embittered his existence. He had for some time past been grossly attacked in several low publications, which he bore, however, with more temper than he did the blind headlong assault on his genius by the Edinburgh Review. Unaccustomed to female society, he at once dreaded and abhorred it; and spoke of women, such I mean, as he neither dreaded nor abhorred, more as playthings than companions. As for domestic happiness he had no idea of it. "A large family," he said, "appeared like opposite ingredients mixed perforce in the same salad, and he never relished the composition." Unfortunately, having never mingled in family circles, he knew nothing of them; and, from being at first left out of them by his relations, he was so completely disgusted that he avoided them, especially the female part. "I consider," said he, "collateral ties as the work of prejudice, and not the bond of the heart, which must choose for itself, unshackled." It was in vain for me to argue that the nursery, and a similarity of pursuits and enjoyments in early life, are the best foundations of friendship and of love; and that to choose freely, the knowledge of home was as requisite as that of wider circles. In those wider circles he had found no friend, and but few companions, whom he used to receive with an assumed gaiety, but real indifference at his heart, and spoke of with little regard, sometimes with sarcasm. He used to talk of one young man, who had been his schoolfellow, with an affection, which he flattered himself was returned. I occasionally met this friend at his apartments, before his last excursion to Newstead. Their portraits, by capital painters, were elegantly framed, and surmounted with their respective coronets, to be exchanged. However, whether taught by ladies in revenge to neglect Lord Byron, or actuated by frivolous inconstancy, he gradually lessened the number of his calls and their duration. Of this, however, Lord Byron made no complaint, till the very day I went to take my leave of him, which was the one previous to his departure. I found him bursting with indignation. "Will you believe it," said he, "I have just met * * *, and asked him to come and sit an hour

with me; he excused himself; and what do you think was his excuse? He was engaged with his mother and some ladies to go shopping! And he knows I set out tomorrow, to be absent for years, perhaps never to return! Friendship!—I do not believe I shall leave behind me, yourself and family excepted, and perhaps my mother, a single being who will care what becomes of me."

'At this period of his life his mind was full of bitter discontent. Already satiated with pleasure, and disgusted with those companions who have no other resource, he had resolved on mastering his appetites; he broke up his harams; and he reduced his palate to a diet the most simple and abstemious; but the passions of the heart were too mighty, nor did it ever enter his mind to overcome *them;* resentment, anger, and hatred, held full sway over him, and his greatest gratification, at that time, was in overcharging his pen with gall, which flowed in every direction, against invividuals, his country, the world, the universe, creation, and the Creator.'

His misfortunes in regard to his early friends, according to Medwin, were not confined to the estrangement of their affections. The latter represents him as saying; 'Almost all the friends of my youth are dead; either shot in duels, ruined, or in the galleys.' On another occasion Byron said to him.

'I was at this time a mere Bond street lounger; a great man at lobbies, coffee, and gambling houses; my afternoons were passed in visits, luncheons, lounging and boxing—not to mention drinking! If I had known you in early life, you would not have been alive now. I remember Scrope Davies, H——, and myself, clubbing £19, all we had in our pockets, and losing it at a hell in St James's-street, at chicken-hazard, which may be called *fowl;* and afterwards getting drunk together till H. and S. D. quarrelled. Scrope afterwards wrote to me for my pistols to shoot himself; but I declined lending them, on the plea that they would be forfeited as a deodand. I knew my answer would have more effect than four sides of prosing.

'Don't suppose, however, that I took any pleasure in all these excesses, or that parson A. K. or W——, were associates to my taste. The miserable consequences of such a life are detailed at length in my Memoirs. My own master at an age when I most required a guide, and left to the dominion of my passions when they were the strongest, with a fortune anticipated before I came into possession of it, and a constitution impaired by early excesses, I commenced my travels in 1809, with a joyless indifference to a world that was all before me.'

Leaving England, as mentioned in the last extract, in his twentysecond year, Lord Byron was absent for two years. Of his travels, one may find a sort of journal in the first two cantos of Childe Harold. During his absence, his mother seems to have been almost his only correspondent. There are twenty letters to her, which fill about fifty duodecimo pages. In giving them to Mr Dallas, the latter reports him to have said, 'some day or other they will be curiosities.' Considering what might have been expected from the writer, perhaps, they are such; for these and the other letters, published by Dallas, as the 'Correspondence of Lord Byron,' form a collection, as intrinsically trifling and worthless, as was ever given to the world. Their value, if any, is accidental, arising from the illustration which they afford of the mind and character of their author.

On his return from his travels, he published the first two cantos of Childe Harold. Of the general level of the poetry in this production, the following stanzas are a fair specimen.

So deem'd the Childe, as o'er the mountains he
Did take his way in solitary guise;
Sweet was the scene, yet soon he thought to flee,
More restless than the swallow in the skies;
Though here awhile he learn'd to moralise,
For Meditation fix'd at times on him;
And conscious Reason whisper'd to despise
His early youth, misspent in maddest whim;
But as he gaz'd on truth his aching eyes grew dim.

To horse! to horse! he quits, forever quits
A scene of peace, though soothing to his soul;
Again he rouses from his moping fits,
But seeks not now the harlot and the bowl.
Onward he flies, nor fix'd as yet the goal
Where he shall rest him on his pilgrimage;
And o'er him many changing scenes must roll
Ere toil his thirst for travel can assuage,
Or he shall calm his breast, or learn experience sage.

Yet Mafra shall one moment claim delay
Where dwelt of yore the Lusian's luckless queen;
And church and court did mingle their array,
And mass and revel were alternate seen;

Lordlings and freres—ill sorted fry I ween !
But here the Babylonian whore hath built
A dome, where flaunts she in such glorious sheen,
That men forget the blood which she hath spilt,
And bow the knee to pomp that loves to varnish guilt.

O'er vales that teem with fruits, romantic hills,
(Oh that such hills upheld a free-born race !)
Whereon to gaze the eye with joyaunce fills,
Childe Harold wends through many a pleasant place.
Though sluggards deem it but a foolish chase,
And marvel men should quit their easy chair,
The toilsome way, and long, long league to trace,
Oh ! there is sweetness in the mountain air,
And life, that bloated Ease can never hope to share.

More bleak to view the hills at length recede,
And, less luxuriant, smoother vales extend ;
Immense horizon-bounded plains succeed !
Far as the eye discerns, withouten end,
Spain's realms appear whereon her shepherds tend
Flocks, whose rich fleece right well the trader knows.
Now must the pastor's arm his lambs defend ;
For Spain is compass'd by unyielding foes,
And all must shield their all, or share Subjection's woes.

Where Lusitania and her sister meet,
Deem ye what bounds the rival realms divide ?
Or ere the jealous queens of nations greet,
Doth Tayo interpose his mighty tide ?
Or dark Sierras rise in craggy pride ?
Or fence of art, like China's vasty wall ?—
Ne barrier wall, ne river deep and wide,
Ne horrid crags, nor mountains dark and tall,
Rise like the rocks that part Hispania's land from Gaul :

But these between a silver streamlet glides,
And scarce a name distinguisheth the brook,
Though rival kingdoms press its verdant sides ;
Here leans the idle shepherd on his crook,
And vacant on the rippling waves doth look,
That peaceful still 'twixt bitterest foeman flow ;
For proud each peasant as the noblest duke ;
Well doth the Spanish hind the difference know
Twixt him and Lusian slave, the lowest of the low.

The above extract is from the first canto, what follows is from the second.

Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth!
Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!
Who now shall lead thy scatter'd children forth,
And long-accustom'd bondage uncreate?
Not such thy sons who whilome did await,
The hopeless warriors of a willing doom,
In bleak Thermopylæ's sepulchral strait—
Oh! who that gallant spirit shall resume,
Leap from Eurotas' banks, and call thee from the tomb?

Spirit of Freedom! when on Phyle's brow
Thou sat'st with Thrasybulus and his train,
Couldst thou forebode the dismal hour which now
Dims the green beauties of thine Attic plain?
Not thirty tyrants now enforce the chain,
But every carle can lord it o'er thy land;
Nor rise thy sons, but idly rail in vain,
Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand,
From birth till death enslaved; in word, in deed, unmann'd.

In all save form alone, how chang'd! and who
That marks the fire still sparkling in each eye,
Who but would deem their bosoms burn'd anew
With thy unquenched beam, lost liberty!
And many dream withal the hour is nigh
That gives them back their fathers' heritage;
For foreign arms and aid they fondly sigh,
Nor solely dare encounter hostile rage,
Or tear their name defil'd from Slavery's mournful page.

Hereditary bondsmen! know ye not
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought.
Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye? no!
True, they may lay your proud despoilers low,
But not for you will Freedom's altars flame.
Shades of the Helots! triumph o'er your foe!
Greece! change thy lords, thy state is still the same;
Thy glorious day is o'er, but not thine years of shame.

When riseth Lacedemon's hardihood,
When Thebes Epaminondas rears again,
When Athens' children are with arts endued,
When Grecian mothers shall give birth to men,

Then may'st thou be restored; but not till then.
A thousand years scarce serve to form a state!
An hour may lay it in the dust; and when
Can man its shattered splendor renovate,
Recall its virtues back, and vanquish Time and Fate!

And yet how lovely in thine age of wo,
Land of lost gods and godlike men! art thou!
Thy vales of evergreen, thy hills of snow
Proclaim thee Nature's varied favorite now.
Thy fanes, thy temples to thy surface bow,
Commingling slowly with heroic earth,
Broke with the share of every rustic plough;
So perish monuments of mortal birth,
So perish all in turn, save well recorded Worth.

These are long extracts. They have been given in the hope of their being read in connexion with the subsequent remarks. At no very distant time, verses such as these were regarded by many, as among the most admirable productions of the age. But, if we are not altogether mistaken, the principal difference between them, and prose too dull to find a reader, consists in the circumstance of their being written in stanzas. Some passages in these cantos rise above, and others fall below what we have quoted; for what is quoted is merely tame and prosaic, while the wit attempted, and the moral feeling discovered, are offensive. Passing over the lamentable parade of vulgar vice and common place infidelity, it may be asked whether sentiments such as the following, from the Albanian song, introduced into the second canto, are adapted to produce any feeling but disgust; or what is the purpose of putting such thoughts into rhyme.

I ask not the pleasures which riches supply,
My sabre shall win what the feeble must buy;
Shall win the young bride with her long flowing hair,
And many a maid from her mother shall tear.

I love the fair face of the maid in her youth,
Her caresses shall lull me, her music shall soothe;
Let her bring from the chambers her many toned lyre,
And sing us a song on the fall of her sire.

But in these first two cantos, there is sometimes an energy of conception and expression, which their author, afterwards.

displayed more fully. They were accompanied, likewise, with a number of minor poems, some of which are among the most powerful and interesting of his productions. Such are the verses beginning—

O lady when I left the shore,
The distant shore which gave me birth,
I hardly thought to grieve once more,
To quit another spot on earth.

Such, too, are the verses addressed to Thyrza, or which apparently relate to the same real or imaginary object of affection.

And didst thou not, since death for thee
Prepared a light and pangless dart,
Once long for him thou ne'er shalt see,
Who held, and holds thee in his heart?
Oh! who like him had watch'd thee here?
Or sadly mark'd thy glazing eye,
In that dread hour ere death appear,
When silent Sorrow fears to sigh,
Till all was past? But when no more
'Twas thine to reck of human wo,
Affection's heart drops, gushing o'er,
Had flow'd as fast—as now they flow

* * * *

Ours was the glance none saw beside;
The smile none else might understand;
The whisper'd thought of hearts allied,
The pressure of the thrilling hand;
The kiss so guiltless and refined
That Love each warmer wish forbore;
Those eyes proclaim'd so pure a mind,
Even passion blush'd to plead for more.
The tone that taught me to rejoice,
When prone, unlike thee, to repine;
The song, celestial from thy voice,
But sweet to me from none but thine;

* * * *

But if in worlds more blest than this
Thy virtues seek a fitter sphere,
Impart some portion of thy bliss,
To wean me from mine anguish here.

Teach me—too early taught by thee!
To bear, forgiving and forgiven;
On earth thy love was such to me;
It fain would form my hope in heaven!

Other passages might be quoted equally touching. No one had more power than Byron, to utter that thrilling voice, which speaks a mind desolate, but unbroken. In these poems it is connected with the most passionate and tender expressions of affection for the dead, and with a moral purity and elevation of sentiment, which he has scarcely elsewhere discovered. But even these poems are polluted by his libertinism. With singular perversion of taste, he has thought it worth while to find a place for a stanza from one of his earlier productions, which has been already quoted,

Though gay companions o'er the bowl,
Dispel awhile the sense of ill;
Though pleasure fire the maddening soul,
The heart—the heart is lonely still.

It may be objected, likewise, that the general tone of feeling is too much that of one,

Who will not look beyond the tomb,
And dares not hope for rest before.

There were various circumstances, which contributed to the popularity of this publication. It was written by a young nobleman, a circumstance, which, if it possessed any merit, was alone sufficient to give it celebrity. Its author was, or soon became, a man of the first notoriety in the highest circles of fashion. He had travelled, where few Englishmen had travelled before, having visited Ali Pacha in his den. The poem of Childe Harold was thought to shadow forth his own wayward, gloomy, wicked, but very interesting character. It contained much concerning Greece; and the 'woods that wave o'er Delphi's steep,' the 'isles that crown the Ægean deep,' the 'streams that wander in eternal light,' are poetical in their very names; and of these names there is a profusion in the second canto of Childe Harold. The favorable judgment of Gifford had been secured by the most lavish flattery in Byron's former poetry; and it is strange, and

almost ludicrous, to observe the importance attached to his critical opinions, both by Mr Dallas and Lord Byron. The latter, in one of his letters to Mr Dallas, says, 'as Gifford has ever been my Magnus Apollo, any approbation such as you mention, would, of course, be more welcome than, "all Bokhara's vaunted gold, than all the gems of Samarkand."' In a subsequent letter, however, he seems to have viewed the matter in a juster light. He says; 'his praise is nothing to the purpose. What could he say? He could not spit in the face of one, who had praised him in every possible way.' But, without doubt, the consideration in which Gifford was held, depended much upon the circumstance of his being, at that time, the editor of the Quarterly Review. In addition to all this, the editor of the Edinburgh Review, upon the appearance of this publication, notwithstanding he had been so bitterly assailed by its author, took occasion to show his magnanimity, his contempt, or his policy, in an article in which it was highly praised, though containing passages not adapted to gratify one, to whom celebrity, in any shape, was not acceptable.

Among the minor faults of Childe Harold, may be mentioned the puerile affectation of its title; and the occasional introduction of obsolete words into a poem essentially modern in its character. In this, as in Byron's other works, the language is not always grammatical, nor are words always used in a correct meaning. Some passages are obscure from indistinctness of thought, and others from awkwardness of expression In Childe Harold there is another fault, characteristic likewise of some of Lord Byron's other writings. It is the want of coherence, of mutual relation of parts, and of general purpose in the poem. His transitions are singularly abrupt and harsh. The train of thought, or feeling, in which we had been indulging, is snapt without warning; and something wholly foreign from it comes in succession. The associations, which introduce one part after another, seem often to be purely accidental. Subjects, which have no natural connexion, are thus brought together in strange confusion. The effect is almost as bewildering and unpleasant, as if a volume of sonnets were printed as a single work. It is a poem, which resembles the walls of some modern erection, composed in part of ancient marbles,—friezes, inscriptions,

and relievos,—placed without order. Lord Byron 'told me,' says Medwin, 'that when he wrote, he neither knew nor cared what was coming next. This,' adds Medwin, 'is the true inspiration of the poet.' The doctrine is comfortable for those who are aspiring to be poets; but, as yet, it is supported only by the practice of Lord Byron, and the authority of Captain Medwin.

Of the life led by Lord Byron in London, after the publication of the first two cantos of Childe Harold, there are statements and details enough in Dallas and Medwin. Courted by trifling and profligate men, and by fashionable and dissolute women, he indulged, without restraint of any sort, in the vices to which he was exposed. The view that is given of fashionable society in London, after every allowance which the case may require, is such as should make us thankful, that we, of the new world, are free from its folly and impurity. He who chooses to look for anything in that poem, may find a commentary upon the accounts of Dallas and Medwin, in some of the cantos of Don Juan. 'I had the reputation,' said Byron, 'of being a great rake, and was a great dandy;' and of this sort of reputation, he is reported to have been as vain, as of the fame of being a great poet. In January, 1815, he was married to Miss Millbank. The next year, he deserted his wife, and his native land. He subsequently inherited a fortune, as the husband of the lady whom he had abandoned;* and seems to have felt no hesitation about regarding the legal title which he had to it, as giving him a moral right to its possession. He continued to persecute Lady Byron after their separation. He dragged her before the world in his various works, for the sake of changing, if possible, the strong current of public sentiment, and directing it against her. He endeavored to represent himself as the one, who 'had suffered things to be forgiven,'

* Medwin reports him to have said, on two different occasions, that when he paid back his wife's portion, he added a sum of equal amount, viz. £10,000. This is stated to be false by Lord Byron's friend, the Westminster Reviewer: who likewise contradicts another account of Byron's generosity in voluntarily relinquishing the half of Lady Noel's fortune after her death. According to Medwin, he said, 'I might have claimed all the fortune for my life, if I had chosen to have done so.' One may reasonably doubt whether all this incorrectness is to be charged on Medwin.

bitter wrongs; but whose heavy curse should be forgiveness.* At the same time, with the disregard of consistency, which marks his writings and character, he announced that he married without love; that even while he stood at the altar, the vision of another came over his mind, and changed his countenance; and that while he 'spoke the fitting vows, he heard not his own words.'† Again, he represented his wife as teaching his child to hate him as a duty;‡ and in his Don Juan, he directed against her all the power of ridicule, which he possessed.

The necessary effect of Lord Byron's course of life was to deprave and harden his heart, and to deepen the natural gloom of his temper. His thoughts seem to have been, not unfrequently, directed to the subject of religion. He regarded its truths with doubt, with dread, and with defiance. Soon after his return from abroad, his professed infidelity led Mr Dallas to endeavor to produce an impression upon his mind favorable to Christianity, or to what the former regarded as Christianity. It is difficult, however, to award the praise which such an attempt might deserve, considering the deplorable manner in which it was executed. It is melancholy to know, that a professed defender of our religion addressed a mind like Lord Byron's, with language and arguments such as follow.

'I compare such philosophers as you, and Hume, and Gibbon, (—I have put you into company that you are not ashamed of—) to mariners wrecked at sea, buffeting the waves for life, and at last carried by a current towards land, where, meeting with rugged and perpendicular rocks, they decide that it is impossible to land, and, though some of their companions point out a firm beach, exclaim—"Deluded things! there can be no beach, unless you melt down these tremendous rocks—no, our ship is wrecked, and to the bottom we must go—all we have to do is to swim on, till Fate overwhelms us."—You do not deny the depravity of the human race—well, that is one step gained—it is allowing that we are cast away—it is, figuratively, our shipwreck. Behold us, then, all scattered upon the ocean, and *all* anxious to be saved—all, at least, willing

* See Childe Harold, Cant. IV. st. 135.

† See 'The Dream.'

‡ 'And though dull hate as duty should be taught,' &c. Childe Harold, Cant. III. st. 117.

to be on *terra firma;* the Humes, the Gibbons, the Voltaires, as well as the Newtons, the Lockes, the Johnsons, &c. The latter make for the beach; the former exhaust their strength about the rocks, and sink, declaring them insurmountable. The incarnation of a Deity! vicarious atonement! the innocent suffering for the guilty! the seeming inconsistencies of the Old Testament, and the discrepancies of the New! &c. &c.! are rocks which I am free to own are not easily melted down; but I am certain that they may be viewed from a point on the beach in less deterring forms, lifting their heads into the clouds indeed, yet adding sublimity to the prospect of the shores on which we have landed, and by no means impeding our progress upon it. In less metaphorical language, my lord, it appears to me, that freethinkers are generally more eager to strengthen their objections than solicitous for conviction; and prefer wandering into proud inferences, to pursuing the evidences of facts; so contrary to the example given to us in all judicial investigations, where testimony precedes reasoning, and is the ground of it. The corruption of human nature being self evident, it is very natural to inquire the cause of that corruption, and as natural to hope that there may be a remedy for it. The cause and the remedy have been stated.

'How are we to ascertain the truth of them? Not by arguing mathematically, but by first examining the proofs adduced; and if they are satisfactory, to use our reasoning powers, as far as they will go, to clear away the difficulties, which may attend them.' pp. 88—90.

It is easy to imagine, how 'such a philosopher' as Lord Byron, would be affected by such rhetoric and such reasoning. It tended, without doubt, more than anything else, which could have been written by a man of Mr Dallas's powers, to strengthen him in his skepticism. Mr Dallas proceeds to relate.

'Lord Byron noticed, indeed, what I had written, but in a very discouraging manner. He would have nothing to do with the subject,—we should all go down together, he said, "So," quoting St Paul, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die;"—he felt satisfied in his creed, for it was better to sleep than to wake.' p. 90.

Such as we have seen being the character of Lord Byron, it could not be expected, that his poetry would have much tendency to raise and improve mankind, much moral beauty, or much that could be agreeable to our higher and purer feelings. It has not. The energy of his passions, and his

intense egotism, made him a poet. They demanded for their expression the vehement and piercing tones, which are sometimes uttered in his verses. He excels in the exhibition of pride, resolution, obstinacy, and solitary self dependence. No one could express with more force the corroding reflections of a perverted and degraded mind; nor add to the bitterness with which he pours out his loathing of life, and what were regarded by him as its purposes. He puts forth the whole strength of his soul in giving a voice to fierce and wicked passions, in the agony of their self inflicted torment. There are few passages, for instance, in his poetry, more powerful than the confession of the Giaour.

Now nothing left to love or hate,
No more with hope or pride elate,
I 'd rather be the thing that crawls
Most noxious o'er a dungeon's walls,
Than pass my dull, unvarying days,
Condemn'd to meditate and gaze.

Yet sometimes, with remorse, in vain
I wish she had not loved again.
She died—I dare not tell thee how;
But look—'tis written on my brow!
There read of Cain the curse and crime,
In characters unworn by time.

He died too in the battle broil.

* * * * * *

I search'd, but vainly search'd, to find
The workings of a wounded mind;
Each feature of that sullen corse
Betray'd his rage, but no remorse.
Oh, what had Vengeance given to trace
Despair upon his dying face!
The late repentance of that hour,
When Penitence hath lost her power
To tear one terror from the grave,
And will not soothe, and cannot save.

And she was lost—and yet I breathed,
But not the breath of human life;
A serpent round my heart was wreathed,
And stung my every thought to strife.

Alike all time, abhorr'd all place,
Shuddering I shrunk from Nature's face,
Where every hue that charm'd before
The blackness of my bosom wore.
The rest thou dost already know,
And all my sins, and half my wo.

Tell me no more of fancy's gleam,
No, father no, 'twas not a dream;
Alas! the dreamer first must sleep,
I only watch'd, and wish'd to weep;
But could not, for my burning brow
Throbb'd to the very brain as now:
I wish'd but for a single tear,
As something welcome, new, and dear,
I wish'd it then, I wish it still,
Despair is stronger than my will.
Waste not thine orison, despair
Is mightier than thy pious prayer;
I would not, if I might, be blest,
I want no paradise, but rest.

A great part of what is most forcible in his poetry consists in the display of his own passions, indulged in imagination without restraint. Throughout almost the whole of it, there is an exhibition, direct or indirect, of his personal feelings and character, either such as they really were, or most commonly modified in such a manner, as seemed to him best adapted to give others that conception of him, which he wished them to entertain; as of an individual, who, as he describes one of his impersonations of himself, his Lara,

———soared beyond, or sunk beneath,
The men with whom he felt condemned to breathe,
And longed by good or ill to separate
Himself from all, who shared his mortal state.

The characteristics described, mark strongly all his higher poems, such as the last two cantos of Childe Harold, Manfred, the Corsair, and Lara. When the 'strong vigor' of his egotism was not 'working at the root,' his poetry is often imperfectly conceived and expressed, tame, extravagant, sometimes heavily elaborate, and sometimes employed about unfit subjects. Examples of one or another of these faults might

be quoted, from the first two cantos of Childe Harold, from that portion of the Giaour, which precedes the confession, the Bride of Abydos, the Siege of Corinth, Parasina, the Hebrew Melodies, and some of those productions of his latter years, which, not being remarkable for any extraordinary exhibition of depravity, even his name could not force into notice. Such passages, indeed, may be found in all his writings. The following are from the Siege of Corinth, neither one of the best, nor one of the worst of his poems.

> There is a temple in ruin stands,
> Fashion'd by long forgotten hands;
> Two or three columns, and many a stone,
> Marble and granite, with grass o'ergrown!
> Out upon Time! it will leave no more
> Of the things to come than the things before!
> Out upon Time! who for ever will leave
> But enough of the past for the future to grieve
> O'er that which hath been, and o'er that which must be;
> What we have seen our sons shall see;
> Remnants of things that have pass'd away,
> Fragments of stone, rear'd by creatures of clay!

The tame description in the first four lines, the triteness and exaggeration of the sentiment which follows, the strange exclamation, 'Out upon time,' and the tripping versification, render the whole passage almost burlesque.

> And he saw the lean dogs, beneath the wall,
> Hold o'er the dead their carnival,
> Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb;
> They were too busy to bark at him!
> From a Tartar's skull they had stripp'd the flesh,
> As ye peel the fig when its fruit is fresh;
> And their white tusks crunch'd o'er the whiter skull
> As it slipp'd through their jaws, when their edge grew dull,
> As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead,
> When they scarce could rise from the spot where they fed.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> The scalps were in the wild dog's maw,
> The hair was tangled round his jaw.

If this style of writing, in which the disgusting and the loathsome are assumed as proper subjects for description, should become popular, and we have lately had much of it

both in poetry and prose, we may expect before long to be entertained, with striking poetical details of the symptoms and sufferings of the Elephantiasis or Plica Polonica.

> The steeds are all bridled, and snort to the rein ;
> Curved is each neck, and flowing each mane ;
> White is the foam of their champ on the bit ;
> The spears are uplifted ; the matches are lit ;
> The cannon are pointed, and ready to roar,
> And crush the wall they have crumbled before ;
> Forms in his phalanx each Janizar ;
> Alp at their head ; his right arm is bare,
> So is the blade of his scimitar.

This, and some of the passages which follow it, have the air of being written in sport, as examples for a new treatise on the Bathos.

> Nothing there, save death, was mute ;
> Stroke, and thrust, and flash, and cry
> For quarter, or for victory,
> Mingle there with the volleying thunder,
> Which makes the distant cities wonder
> How the sounding battle goes,
> If with them, or for their foes ;
> If they must mourn, or may rejoice
> In that annihilating voice,
> Which pierces the deep hills through and through
> With an echo dread and new ;
> You might have heard it, on that day,
> O'er Salamis and Megara ;
> (We have heard the hearers say,)
> Even unto Piræus bay.
>
> ---
>
> There stood an old man—his hairs were white,
> But his veteran arm was full of might ;
> So gallantly bore he the brunt of the fray,
> The dead before him, on that day,
> In a semicircle lay.

To return, however, to Lord Byron's more powerful poetry, it may be observed, that though his feelings and passions were in their combination and general character, such as to repel the sympathy of the better part of mankind, yet there are passages of great power in which some personal emotion is expressed, without offence to moral sentiment.

Once more upon the waters! yet once more!
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar!
Swift be their guidance, whereso'er it lead!
Though the strain'd mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvass fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam, to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail.

There is something glorious in the energy, which can regard the ocean as a managed steed, welcome its roar, and abandon itself to the storm; and the feeling which this is adapted to excite, is rendered deeper by the accompanying expression of suffering and solitariness.

The two last cantos of Childe Harold display much higher poetical powers, than the two preceding. Their author, likewise, has chosen to exhibit his character under a somewhat different and less unamiable aspect. There is more of moral feeling; there is, sometimes, even an approach to religious sentiment.

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep;—
All heaven and earth are still; from the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain coast,
All is concentred in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

The admiration and flattery which he had received, the court which had been paid him, the real kindness, he had experienced, the readiness of every one to allow his claims to their full extent, and to forget his offences, and the high rank which he had attained as a popular writer, had all contributed to soften the asperity of his passions, and to take off the edge of his misanthropy. At the same time, when in the full sunshine of favor, he had darkened his own prospects, he had, by his misconduct, separated himself from society and from his country, and become a just object of general reprobation. He had, through his evil passions, humbled himself even in the eye of the world. He could not but feel his

situation ; and he appears, likewise, to have felt something of compunction, and to have admitted the entrance of better and more serious thoughts, than those with which he had been familiar. It was not for one so circumstanced to assume a tone of defiance, and to talk, very broadly, of contemning his fellow men ; for society had passed on him a sentence of exile ; and he could not glory in what had become an involuntary separation. The world, however, was still wooing him back to its favor ; he was still ' Begged to be glad, entreated to aspire ;' and to secure that favor, which was his life, he was stimulated to a more splendid exertion of his powers, and led to accommodate himself more to the moral sentiments of mankind. The last two cantos of Childe Harold, therefore, take precedence of his other works, and afford a fair example of his great powers, and of some of his great defects as a poet.

His real character, and his assumed poetical character, which was moulded upon the former, prevented him from feeling or expressing any very extended sympathy with his fellowmen. He could not be a disinterested sharer in their joys. He had no power of throwing a poetic charm over common scenes and objects, the common interests and hopes of life. He was as little able to compose L'Allegro, or Il Penseroso, as the Analogy of Butler. He professed to regard with contempt the ordinary purposes and passions of men, and those powers, which are displayed in their gratification and accomplishment. He felt no enthusiasm in contemplating the energy of high and self denying virtue. He disbelieved, or affected to disbelieve, its existence. Above all, he was destitute of that faith and those hopes, which connecting man, in intimate union, with the unseen and the infinite, raise him not less as an intellectual and imaginative, than as a moral, being ; and present him under those relations, through which alone he becomes an object of deep and permanent interest.

Some scenes, however, the gloomy character of Byron gave him power to conceive strongly ; and with some feelings, it enabled him to sympathise. The distant roar of cannon breaking upon the gaiety of the young and the beautiful, heard first in silence and suspense, and then calling away the devoted to battle and death ; the terror and agony of such a parting ; and the unavailing lamentation over those snatched

from life, when life is in its bloom and promise, were subjects suited to his temper and powers. The latter, accordingly, are displayed in all their force throughout that passage, which no one who has read it can forget, beginning,

> There was a sound of revelry by night,
> And Belgium's capital had gathered then
> Her Beauty and her Chivalry.

In his description of the sorrow of those who mourn for the dead, gloomy and striking images are accumulated, with a profusion unusual in his poetry; for in general he has more of passion and strong conception, than of that power of mind, which apprehends resemblances and illustrations, imparting a moral type to material things.

> They mourn, but smile at length; and, smiling, mourn:
> The tree will wither long before it fall;
> The hull drives on, though mast and sail be torn;
> The roof tree sinks, but moulders on the hall,
> In massy hoariness; the ruin'd wall
> Stands when its wind worn battlements are gone;
> The bars survive the captive they enthral;
> The day drags through though storms keep out the sun;
> And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on;
>
> Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
> In every fragment multiplies; and makes
> A thousand images of one that was,
> The same, and still the more, the more it breaks;
> And thus the heart will do which not forsakes,
> Living in shatter'd guise, and still, and cold,
> And bloodless, with its sleepless sorrow aches,
> Yet withers on till all without is old,
> Showing no visible sign, for such things are untold.

It was in the same spirit, and with equal power, that he had already described the death of Lara, and the agony of Kaled.

> A breathing but devoted warrior lay;
> 'Twas Lara bleeding fast from life away.
> His follower once, and now his only guide,
> Kneels Kaled watchful o'er his welling side,
> And with his scarf would staunch the tides that rush,
> With each convulsion, in a blacker gush;

And then, as his faint breathing waxes low,
In feebler, not less fatal trickling flow;
He scarce can speak, but motions him 'tis vain,
And merely adds another throb to pain.
He clasps the hand that pang which would assuage,
And sadly smiles his thanks to that dark page,
Who nothing fears, nor feels, nor heeds, nor sees,
Save that damp brow which rests upon his knees;
Save that pale aspect, where the eye, though dim,
Held all the light that shone on earth for him.

That deep sense of the quietness, beauty, and still sublimity of nature, which is professed so strongly in the last two cantos of Childe Harold, seems rather assumed than real. It does not appear to be, as their author professes, a true 'love,' if such may exist, 'of earth only for its earthly sake;' but rather a factitious sentiment, intended to strengthen, by contrast, the impression which he wished to give of his indisposition for human converse. He would have it thought, that he was so separated in character from his fellowmen, that though he 'had filed' (that is, defiled) 'his mind,' and brought it nearer to their level, still his soul could not bear to hold communion with them, and fled from their intercourse to the solitudes of nature. 'To me,' he tells us,

'High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture;'

though, in fact, they were his chosen places of residence. Regarded in any other light, the sentiment of which we are speaking was inconsistent with his character. We accordingly find that much of the language, in which it is expressed, is misty and unmeaning, artificial and extravagant.

Ye stars! that are the poetry of heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires,—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

No one, whose mind was really elevated and purified by the solemn grandeur of a midnight sky, would think of expressing his feelings by an allusion to the forgotten folly of astrology, or to the metaphorical uses of the word, star. To the latter, the last line may be conjectured to refer ; but one can hardly feel certain, that he has divined its meaning.

But in his descriptions of the loveliness of nature, there is sometimes great beauty.

> The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
> With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
> Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
> And living as if earth contained no tomb,—
> And glowing into day ; we may resume
> The march of our existence.

There are few passages in poetry more richly colored than the following.

> The Moon is up, and yet it is not night—
> Sunset divides the sky with her—a sea
> Of glory streams along the Alpine height
> Of blue Friuli's mountains ; Heaven is free
> From clouds, but of all colors seems to be
> Melted to one vast Iris of the West,
> Where the Day joins the past Eternity ;
> While, on the other hand, meek Dian's crest
> Floats through the azure air—an island of the blest !
>
> A single star is at her side, and reigns
> With her o'er half the lovely heaven ; but still
> Yon sunny sea heaves brightly, and remains
> Roll'd o'er the peak of the far Rhætian hill,
> As Day and Night contending were, until
> Nature reclaim'd her order ;—gently flows
> The deep dyed Brenta, where their hues instil
> The odorous purple of a new born rose,
> Which streams upon her stream, and glass'd within it glows,
>
> Fill'd with the face of heaven, which, from afar,
> Comes down upon the waters ; all its hues,
> From the rich sunset to the rising star,
> Their magical variety diffuse ;
> And now they change ; a paler shadow strews
> Its mantle o'er the mountains ; parting day

Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new color as it gasps away,
The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone—and all is gray.

Even in this passage, however, the construction is awkward and embarrassing, and the simile of a dying dolphin is disagreeable, both from its triteness, and from its want of moral harmony with the scene described.

But Byron's descriptions of nature, though they are gemmed with brilliant expressions, yet, taken each as a whole, are, for the most part, unsatisfactory and faulty. They have often the air of being written as a task. There is in his pictures, a want of clearness, of truth, and of a suitable disposition of the parts to each other. The description neither conveys distinct images of what is visible, nor a just impression of the emotions, which the scene is adapted to produce. There is sometimes an exaggeration of false sentiment, which shows a want of true perception and of natural feeling; as for instance in the passage about 'Clarens, sweet Clarens,' which was intended to be so very sweet; but in writing which the author mistook extravagance, and want of meaning for poetry; the key note of the whole being found in the following words—

Thy air is the young breath of passionate thought;
Thy trees take root in love.

The same want of real harmony of mind with the works of nature appears in his description of the cataract of Velino.

The roar of waters!—from the headlong height,
Velino cleaves the wave worn precipice;
The fall of waters! rapid as the light,
The flashing mass foams, shaking the abyss;
The hell of waters! where they howl and hiss,
And boil in endless torture; while the sweat
Of their great agony, wrung out from this
Their Phlegethon, curls round the rocks of jet,
That gird the gulf around, in pitiless horror set.

In aiming at sublimity, Byron here produces only conceptions of disgust and horror. He applies images of bodily torture, and muscular force and convulsion, to a subject to which they are wholly unsuitable. The waters of a cataract

are compared to living beings in an agony of pain. There is little external resemblance between their struggles, and the overwhelming rush of a torrent; and none between the feelings, which the one spectacle and the other are adapted to produce. The offensiveness of the passage is in some degree aggravated by the confusion of literal and metaphorical language, and by representing the waters as in a cold sweat.

Following those just quoted, there are, however, some lines which may remind one of the rich metaphorical language of Shakspeare. The spray of the torrent,

> With its unemptied cloud of gentle rain,
> Is an eternal April to the ground,
> Making it all one emerald.

These lines, however, are in no accordance with what precedes or follows. The turmoil of description is continued through several stanzas; but the real tameness of feeling, which runs through the whole, betrays itself in the concluding line of one of them;

> Look back!
> Lo! where it comes like an eternity,
> As if to sweep down all things in its tract,
> Charming the eye with dread,—a matchless cataract.

A passage relating to the Appenines, immediately follows the description of the cataract of Velino. It consists, with one exception, in a not very forcible dilation of the thought, that the author would have admired these mountains more, if he had not beheld others of greater sublimity. The following is a part—

> I have looked on Ida with a Trojan's eye,
> Athos, Olympus, Ætna, Atlas, made
> These hills seem things of lesser dignity.

The exception referred to, is a figure in the highest degree picturesque; 'lone Soracte's height'

> ———from out the plain,
> Heaves like a long swept wave about to break,
> And [which] on the curl hangs pausing.

The following is another specimen of Byron's powers of description, from Manfred.

> It is not noon—the sunbow's rays still arch
> The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
> And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
> O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,
> And fling its lines of foaming light along,
> And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
> The giant steed, to be bestrode by Death,
> As told in the Apocalypse.

This passage, which has been admired, would be finer, if it were more intelligible. It is often easy to discover a writer's meaning, even where he does not express it correctly; but this is not the case with the lines before us. What is said is, that the sunbow's rays roll the waving column, and fling its lines of foaming light along; what was intended to be said, we cannot conjecture. It is clear, however, that the waterfall is first described as a column of sheeted silver arched by a rainbow; and, afterwards, compared to the

> Pale courser's tail,
> The giant steed [steed's], to be bestrode by Death.

But this does not seem to be the language of an accurate observer of nature. It may be doubted, whether the appearances supposed can coexist at the same point of view. At a distance from a waterfall, where its white foam, in apparently retarded motion, and spreading as it descends, is alone visible, the comparison may be admitted; but at such a distance, we see nothing of rainbows, or of sheeted silver, glittering in the sunbeams.

The effect of what is beautiful and grand in nature, depends so much upon the purest moral and religious associations, that he whose mind is destitute of these, can have but little sensibility to her power. It is nature, as animated by the imagination, and endued with moral life; it is nature, as peopled with real and imaginary inhabitants, whose joys and interests are blended with the visible scene before us; it is nature, as the work of God, penetrating us with a feeling of his love, and connecting us with his infinity; it is nature in her eternal magnificence, calling up images of what is past and what

is to come, and raising us above the passions of the present hour; it is nature thus contemplated, and thus acting upon us, that inspires the poet, and elevates the philosopher. There is no harmony between her and the misanthropist, the disbeliever in virtue, the man who is the slave of his lusts, or haunted by remorse, or harassed by bitter and angry passions; him who can talk of the 'skies' as 'raining plagues on men like dew.' It was with a very different character from that of Byron, that another poet thus expressed himself; 'I am growing fit, I hope, for a better world, of which the light of the sun is but a shadow; for I doubt not but God's works here are what come nearest to his works there; and that a true relish of the beauties of nature is the most easy preparation, and gentlest transition to an enjoyment of those of heaven.'* The want of real feeling, in many of the descriptions of Byron, is often not merely a deficiency, but makes itself felt as the cause of artificial sentiment, an unnatural straining after effect, and harsh and incongruous images.

But he has great vividness of conception, and great power of expression; and where the aspects of nature corresponded to the gloom and storminess of his own mind, there is sometimes a burst of poetry, which will never be excelled. The thunder storm among the Alps—every one recollects it.

> The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh night,
> And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
> Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
> Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
> From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
> Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
> But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
> And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
> Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

Nothing can be more magnificent. There is here no imperfect personification. The mastery of the poet's spell is complete; and the thunder and the mountains are alive.

We may feel more fully the wonderful power of this passage, by comparing it with another description of the same

* This passage is from a letter of Pope to Miss M. Blount; one of those letters on which Bowles has founded a gross attack upon the morals of that eminent man. The defect of good sense, in Mr Bowles' reasoning on this subject, is almost as remarkable as his strange malignity against the dead.

kind, which has been, perhaps, more celebrated than any other, that of Virgil, in his first Georgic.

> Ipse Pater, mediâ nimborum in nocte, coruscâ
> Fulmina molitur dextrâ ; quo maxima motu
> Terra tremit ; fugere feræ ; et mortalia corda
> Per gentes humilis stravit pavor ; ille flagranti
> Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
> Dejicit ; ingeminant austri et densissimus imber ;
> Nunc nemora ingenti vento, nunc littora, plangunt.*

It may be curious to observe, that the superiority of the former passage arises, in part, from its greater conformity to nature. The thunder storm of Virgil, by which the whole earth is shaken, and mortal hearts prostrated with fear through the nations, is far too extensive and powerful in its effects. His description does not give us that feeling of reality, for the want of which no poetical language can compensate. In addition to this, Virgil's sole agent is Jupiter; and we do not perceive why he acts. There is no moral character connected with the display of what may be called his physical power. The conception, for anything which appears, may be that of a capricious tyrant. But in the verses of Byron, the phenomena of nature are indued with forms of life, fully corresponding to the powerful impressions, which they are adapted to produce.

In the passage from Byron, it is true, that 'the light of a dark eye in woman,' is out of place, not being in accordance with the gigantic sublimity and force of the images, among which it is introduced. The description, likewise, is continued through another stanza of inferior merit, and which

* Of such a passage, it is vain to attempt to give a satisfactory translation The following is somewhat more literal than any other we have seen.

> Amid a night of storms, the Almighty Sire
> Wields the fierce thunder, his right arm on fire;
> The huge earth trembles; the wild beasts have fled:
> Throughout the nations, men are bowed with dread.
> He, with his flaming dart, meanwhile strikes down
> The crest of Rhodope, or Athos' crown,
> Or the Ceraunian summits. The deep roar
> Of wind and rain redoubles. On the shore,
> The raving billows dash with ceaseless sound,
> And groaning forests answer far around.

concludes with an imagination, than which there is scarcely anything more burlesque in his Beppo or Don Juan—

> ———and now the glee
> Of the loud hills shakes with their mountain mirth,
> As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth.

The disproportion and incongruity between the powers of Byron's mind, and especially the want of strong moral sentiment, corresponding to and sustaining the vigor of his conceptions, appear equally in other passages of his writings, as in his descriptions of nature. His force is sometimes that of a blind Cyclops, aimless and purposeless. Without religious faith, regarding himself and others as mere beings of this world, taking pleasure in representing himself as degraded and miserable, and his fellowmen as creatures with whom he was unwilling to be ranked, he excluded from his poetry all the infinite variety of thoughts and feelings, which belong to the higher part of our nature. He did not recognise those great truths, with which all just sentiments are connected. In his mind, the source of intellectual day was darkened, and he perceived not the beautiful coloring, and the ever varying lights and shadows, which it spreads over the objects of thought and imagination. The skepticism of a depraved heart is not inconsistent with the vehement expression of strong passions, or of deep gloom ; but it is inconsistent with all generous and invigorating purposes and sentiments, and with all those emotions, which are most sublime and ennobling. The poetry of Byron is the poetry of earth only ; where it is not, as in his Cain, the poetry of hell. His mind, strongly acted upon by a few objects, reacted strongly upon them. But the sphere within which his intellect exerted itself was narrow. Scarcely any writer has so much of what is essentially repetition. Every one begins to grow weary at last of being told of his misanthropy and his misery, his passions, and his pride, the worthlessness of man and the worthlessness of life.

From the causes which have been mentioned, there is often a striking contrast between the grandeur of Byron's conceptions, and the poverty and deadness of the sentiment, with which they are connected. The latter resembles some worthless corpse, lying in state, surrounded by the insignia

of nobility, and with banners hanging over it. Let us take, for example, one of his most striking passages.

> Oh Rome! my country! city of the soul!
> The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
> Lone mother of dead empires! and control
> In their shut breasts their petty misery.
> What are our woes and sufferance? Come and see
> The cypress, hear the owl, and plod your way
> O'er steps of broken thrones and temples, Ye!
> Whose agonies are evils of a day—
> world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.
>
> The Niobe of nations! there she stands,
> Childless and crownless, in her voiceless wo;
> An empty urn within her wither'd hands,
> Whose holy dust was scatter'd long ago;
> The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;
> The very sepulchres lie tenantless
> Of their heroic dwellers; dost thou flow,
> Old Tiber! through a marble wilderness?
> Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

There is nothing in poetry more colossal and imposing, than some of the expressions in this passage—'Lone mother of dead empires'—

> The Niobe of nations! there she stands,
> Childless and crownless.

In what follows, images of desolated greatness are brought before us with powerful effect—

> The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;
> The very sepulchres lie tenantless
> Of their heroic dwellers; dost thou flow,
> Old Tiber! through a marble wilderness?

What, then, is the defect of this passage? We answer, the unnatural and false sentiment, which is arrayed with all this magnificence. Rome is personified, and represented as standing overwhelmed with her voiceless wo; and we are called upon, in contemplating the misery felt by this personification, to repress the expression of our own sufferings. The figure itself is carried too far, and its effect weakened, when the imagination of distress is distinctly introduced. But the thought becomes altogether incongruous, when this imaginary distress is applied to the moral purpose of enforcing patience

upon those, whose agonies are represented as nothing in comparison, being but the evils of a day. Strong sympathy, even with the real sufferings of those who have lived during past ages, is not the feeling, which a contemplation of the ruins of human glory is naturally adapted to produce. With the false sentiment, which runs through the passage, is connected the tame extravagance of the concluding apostrophe to the Tiber—

> Rise with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

In the following stanza, Rome is still the subject.

> The double night of ages, and of her,
> Night's daughter, Ignorance, hath wrapt and wrap*
> All round us; we but feel our way to err;
> The ocean hath his chart, the stars their map,
> And Knowledge spreads them on her ample lap;
> But Rome is as the desert, where we steer,
> Stumbling o'er recollections; now we clap
> Our hands, and cry 'Eureka!' it is clear—
> When but some false mirage of ruin rises near.

Here, again, we have, as it were, an Egyptian mausoleum for the remains of a deified animal. The rich poetical language rather conceals than expresses the meaning, which, when discovered, is nothing more, than that the antiquaries are in doubt about the original names and purposes of some of the ruins of Rome; that it is a question, for instance, whether the remains of a portico belonged to a Temple of Mars, or a Basilic of Antoninus Pius. This is not a fact to be announced with such elaborate solemnity.

In some passages, the poverty of sentiment is such, that there is only the shadow of a thought; nothing real and palpable.

> The lightning rent from Ariosto's bust
> The iron crown of laurel's mimic'd leaves;
> Nor was the ominous element unjust,
> For the true laurel-wreath which Glory weaves
> Is of the tree no bolt of thunder cleaves,
> And the false semblance but disgraced his brow;
> Yet still, if fondly Superstition grieves,
> Know, that the lightning sanctifies below
> Whate'er it strikes; yon head is doubly sacred now.

* *Wraps* is required by grammar.

The semblance of meaning in this passage must disappear in any attempt to express it in prose. We can only arrange the thoughts in succession. 'It was not unjust in the lightning, which is ominous, to strike the iron crown from the bust of Ariosto, for Ariosto himself was entitled, metaphorically speaking, to a laurel crown; and there is a fable, that the laurel is not struck by lightning. Therefore the crown on his bust, being only made of metal, in imitation of laurel, disgraced it. But if the superstitious are still troubled, it may be added, that it was the custom of the ancients to consecrate to the gods what had been struck with lightning, therefore the bust of Ariosto is now doubly sacred.' The want of any proper relation between the thoughts thus forced together, renders the whole passage unmeaning.

In the expression of abstract sentiment, in all which might imply a philosophical spirit, or just and comprehensive habits of thinking, Byron is equally deficient. He had no fixed principles of belief or action; and, in consequence, there is much opposition and incongruity of opinion and feeling, expressed throughout his works. There is scarcely any subject on which he appears to have thought consistently or correctly. It may be doubted, whether there is a single passage in his writings, adapted to fix itself in the memory, as a striking expression of any general truth. The following is one of his most labored efforts.

> But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,
> And *there* hath been thy bane; there is a fire
> And motion of the soul which will not dwell
> In its own narrow being, but aspire
> Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
> And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
> Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
> Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
> Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.
>
> This makes the madmen who have made men mad
> By their contagion; Conquerors and Kings,
> Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
> Sophists, Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things
> Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
> And are themselves the fools to those they fool;

Envied, yet how unenviable ! what stings
Are theirs ! One breast laid open were a school,
Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule ;

Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last,
And yet so nursed and bigoted to strife,
That should their days surviving perils past,
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die ;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

He who ascends to mountain tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow ;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,
And far *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

The concluding simile is trite. The whole sense of the passage is, that those who act powerfully upon their fellow-men are all governed but by one feeling, a feverish restlessness, which leads them to aspire to what is unlawful; that they are all sources of mischief to others, and objects of their hate; and that they are all peculiarly unhappy themselves. The Edinburgh reviewer entered into a formal refutation of the latter doctrine. The other positions do not seem to be more profound or tenable.

In the delineation of his heroes, either in narrative or dramatic poetry, Byron is not successful. They are, in general, modifications of his poetical image of his own character; combinations, a little varied, of the same elementary passions. In tracing, however, their resemblance to his imagination of himself, we must take into account the gradual changes of his mind and heart. In his latter years, the fire of his passions was smouldering ; he was becoming a grosser sensualist ; his feelings had lost their keenness ; after his fashion, be speculated more and imagined less. Thus Childe Harold was the

ideal picture of his youth, and Sardanapalus was drawn from the same character, when withered and decaying. The first, in his predominant features, is a misanthropist, sated with pleasure, yet perceiving no other good ; the last, a voluptuary, who has learnt to philosophise, and is only indifferent to everything but pleasure. Byron was a magician, without the art of evoking other spirits, but possessing, like Kehama, the power of multiplying himself. But when the inconsistencies of his own fluctuating passions were fixed, and exaggerated, and made to coexist as permanent, active qualities in his poetical creations, imaginary characters were produced, such as nature never knew. There is a moral absurdity in the confusion of qualities brought together. In his Corsair, for instance, he exhibits a pirate, who has 'a laughing devil in his sneer,' and whose frown of hatred withered all hope of mercy, but whose strongest feeling, at the same time, is the purest and most tender affection. His sense of honor is so exquisite, that he prefers being impaled himself to destroying an enemy while asleep, whose life, while awake, he had just before assaulted in the character of a spy. The inconsistency admits of no aggravation ; or it might be added, that in the continuation of the same story, this highminded pirate is guilty of cowardly assassination. The moral painting in this picture of character, is as if one were to represent tender and beautiful flowers springing up among the ashes and scoriæ, which form the crater of a volcano. Where there is less of incongruity in the qualities assigned by Byron to his heroes, there is at least some unnatural extravagance, irreconcilable with moral probability. The consequence is, that no clear and well defined impression of character is left upon the mind. As individuals, they possess no power over our sympathy. They are only shadowy and monstrous shapes of things, which never were, nor can be.

In his presentations of female character, there is less inconsistency, but they, likewise, are formed after one model. They are very beautiful, passionately fond, full of simplicity, tenderness, and constancy. This is a very interesting combination of qualities, which is marred only by one uniform defect. They have neither good sense, nor good taste, in selecting the objects of their affection. They are all possessed with the sentiment, expressed in one of Moore's songs—

'I know not, I ask not, if guilt 's in thy heart,
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art.'

Byron's writings have throughout a personal reference; and of such affection he could conceive himself the object.

Some of the most striking characteristics of his poetry belong rather to the age, than to the individual. It is, or it assumes to be, the expression of strong feeling and passion. But poetry had been growing too mechanical an art. There was a tendency to address, not so much the universal feelings of men, as the artificial taste of connoisseurs. It had been too much confined to merely arbitrary rules. Its language was becoming vague, unmeaning, traditionary. It abounded in idle epithets, loosely applied. It was overrun with conventional figures, conceptions, and modes of thought, which had long ceased to correspond to anything really existing in men's hearts and minds, and which have now become wholly obsolete. The muse was still invoked, as she was by Homer, three thousand years ago; men thought that they wrote of love, when they talked about Venus and Cupid, wounds, flames, and darts; the heathen mythology still flourished in English verse; heroes were arrayed in rhyme, in ancient costume and armor; and the shepherds and shepherdesses of the golden days were seen in vision in the streets of London. Much that was admired in its day, as the heroic plays of Dryden, the Henry and Emma of Prior, the pastorals of Shenstone, and, we must add, of Pope, the love elegies of Hammond, and in fact a great part of the amatory poetry in our language, had but little relation to human passions and feelings, but seemed to be adapted to some strange, grotesque, and often very disagreeable race of beings, among whom the author had transferred himself from the living world around him. These remarks do not refer to any particular school of poets, and still less to all the poets of any particular period; but to certain prevailing faults in poetry, which had gone unchecked for a considerable time, and which were removing it, farther and farther, from its true character. The decrepitude of the artificial style, which has been described, appears in the writings of Hayley, and some other poets of his day; and the false taste, which had been nourished, is proved by the temporary popularity which these writers attained. Hayley was for a time the greatest living poet of England.

But at the very period when poetry had become most artificial and insipid, the intellectual powers of men had begun to display themselves in action and speculation, with a force, which seemed to have been accumulating during a period of repose. One of those eras had commenced, which mark the history of mankind. The impulse was given in our country, where the last half century has been a period of almost uninterrupted improvement. In Europe, it has been a season of terrible contests and destruction; of crimes and madness, yet of high qualities and great virtues; of the overturn and reestablishment of thrones; of strong passions, good and bad, in array against each other; of bold speculations, true and false, conflicting with the most established and authoritative prejudices; and of the natural feelings and desires of men, struggling against artificial and oppressive forms of society. But there too much has been gained. Considering the human character under its most favorable aspect, we may say, that man has become a being of bolder purposes, of wider views, of higher principles of action, more consistent and intrepid in his reasonings, more energetic in his will, more tender, generous, and sincere in his affections.

But poetry of the kind that has been spoken of, was not suited to the character of such an age. There was a demand for something more true, natural, and vigorous. There was a still stronger demand for something more exciting and passionate. The craving for poetry of the latter character was so strong, that the most rude and extravagant attempts were for a time received with favor. The writers of the Della Cruscan school, now never mentioned but by way of ridicule, enjoyed a temporary blaze of popularity in England; and the forgotten book, The British Album, in which some of their verses were collected, was republished and extensively circulated in this country, at a time when the reprinting of a literary work was a rare event. Under the influences described, a new spirit has been communicated to English literature, conformed to the character of the age. All that was merely arbitrary, traditional, and factitious, has fallen into contempt. So far the change has been well. But the unalterable principles of taste, founded in the nature of man, and the eternal truths of morality and religion, have, likewise, been neglected or outraged, as antiquated prejudices. By

some writers, the highest excellence has been attained, in accordance with the improved character of man. By others, the vilest and grossest passions, the worst part of human nature, has been addressed without reserve. Some have enlarged the sphere of our imagination and feelings, conducting us to new prospects,—*avia Pieridum loca, nullius ante trita solo.* Others, for the sake of producing some effect, have hazarded anything, however strange and offensive. There have been writers, who appeared to think, that there is no proper distinction of our emotions into agreeable and disagreeable; and that if their readers were but strongly moved it was enough; no matter whether with simply painful sympathy, or disgust, or horror. Others, of great genius, like Wordsworth, in their dislike of the artificial style of poetry, have seemed to fancy that everything natural must be pleasing; and that he, who, even in the most common language, should give an account of his feelings, however trifling, or however accidental in their origin, must interest the feelings of his readers. They have even caricatured the simplicity of nature. We have had popular writers of every class, from Edgeworth, and Scott, and the author of Thalaba, down to the riotous swaggerers, who furnish the rank extravagances of Blackwood's magazine. But there is no writer, whose works have corresponded more than those of Byron, to the powerful, energetic, and passionate character of the times, have been more deeply stamped with the impression of its vices, or have been more adapted to satisfy the morbid appetite, which has existed, for every kind of excitement. This has been one of the accidental causes of his extraordinary popularity.

Another cause, contributing much to the great interest, which has been felt in his works, is their egotism. Though they do not bear the form, they have, in fact, the character of 'Confessions.' But he, who writes of himself and his own emotions, is secure of readers. By a natural delusion, it seems as if the author were giving his confidence to us individually, and we are ready to make him a return of our sympathy and regard. We are interested both in the writer, and in the knowledge which we fancy he may communicate. We are curious to know the inward structure and motions of another human mind, the secrets of another heart like our own. He may tell us, as it seems, what we could not, or

dared not tell ourselves. But, in truth, such intimate knowledge of another mind is not to be derived from a confidence, which we share only in common with all the rest of the world. It is not humility, but vanity, which prompts the writers of confessions. They may acknowledge much evil of themselves, for this acknowledgment, instead of diminishing the interest of their readers, may contribute to enhance it. There are many sentiments, of which men delight to be the objects, besides approbation; and some of them are rather increased than weakened by vices and defects of character. Such writers may, even with Rousseau and Byron, avow actions or qualities, which in themselves are merely revolting, for this avowal may be accompanied with the implication, that their faults are intimately connected with excellences altogether peculiar; and in fact, are only marks of a moral idiosyncrasy, by which the individual is distinguished from, and raised above other men. Vices may even be feigned or exaggerated, as we find in real life, for the sake of bringing out some favorite trait of character in bolder relief; or of giving stronger solicitude to the sympathy, which has been excited by other qualities. But whatever is told, the simple truth is not told. The author conforms his accounts, and his expressions of feeling, to some imaginary conception of himself, which he secretly admires, and fancies others will admire. The popularity, therefore, of such writings, is not lasting. In a little time, men find that they have been deceived, and cheated out of their sympathy and admiration. The author betrays himself in his own writings; the facts of his life, as they are more known and attended to, are perceived to be inconsistent with his exhibition of himself; and some Grimm, some Marmontel, or some Medwin, some enemy or some friend, springs up to give the literal prose story of what had appeared only in poetical and picturesque guise. Thus the true character of the individual gradually displaces his theatrical personation of himself. In the age after that in which it is written, his book, like the Confessions of Rousseau, ceases to be an object of feeling and enthusiasm. Its vitality is gone, and it remains only as a subject of moral analysis to the student of human nature. The life and writings of Byron corresponded less with each other, than those of Rousseau; and in the poetry of the former, there are grosser incongruities, than

in the prose of the latter. Byron was continually calling upon men in the most moving language, to inform them, that he did not wish for their notice or concern; he was pouring out unremitted wailings, and avowing, at the same time, that he had learnt, with stern resolution, to suffer in solitude and silence; he was professing his dislike and contempt of the world in constant efforts to secure its admiration and favor.

That he truly suffered, from a gloomy temperament, and from the natural effects of his vices, there can be no doubt. But this is vulgar misery, very different from that 'sublime sadness, breathed from the mysteries of our mortal existence,'* with which his more enthusiastic admirers thought him to be possessed. As he lived longer, his feelings became more callous, and he acquired more of selfish recklessness. Every one now knows, that Lord Byron, as a man, was a different personage from the Lord Byron of his own poetry. The accounts of his life and his conversations, the levity of his prose writings, and the last employment of his days, his Don Juan, have left few believers in his sublime and mysterious melancholy.

Lord Byron's course of life, while on the continent, after leaving England, answered to that which he before led. His last mistress was a married woman, the daughter of an Italian count, whose family, with an insensibility to infamy, not, we hope, to be found out of Italy, did not feel the connexion as disgraceful. The character of the few companions with whom he principally associated, is well known. He produced various works, some of which cannot be spoken of with too severe reprobation; while others had not striking qualities of any kind, sufficient to attract much notice. He perceived that his fame was sinking under him, that he was beginning to be regarded with but little of poetical enthusiasm, and that he had outraged too far the moral sentiments of mankind. He felt this state of things with abundant irritability, which he expressed in verses as spirited as the following,—the only extract we shall give from his Don Juan.

> Dogs or men! (for I flatter you in saying
> That ye are dogs—your betters far) ye may
> Read, or read not, what I am now essaying,
> To show ye what ye are in every way.

* Edinburgh Review, vol. 30. p. 98. Am. Ed.

As little as the the moon stops for the baying
Of wolves, will the bright muse withdraw one ray
From out her skies—then howl your idle wrath!
While she still silvers o'er your gloomy path.

Under such circumstances, weary of life, disgusted with his pursuits, sensible that he had wantonly perverted his extraordinary powers, and become an object of universal disapprobation; yet desirous, as ever, of being distinguished by the admiration of the world, he was led to change the scene, and undertake his expedition to Greece. The romance of his admirers was revived for a time by this event. But no one, we suppose, imagines that he rendered, or was capable of rendering, any important services to the cause of that country. If the Greeks are, as we hope, to recover their freedom, it may be well for their posterity, that he had not the power. The examples of those distinguished in the history of a nation, as its benefactors, are likely to have much influence upon the national character. Our own country has, in that respect, been peculiarly fortunate. It would have been unhappy for Greece, if Lord Byron had been her Lafayette.

There is a passage in Medwin's work, which is striking, both from the scene described, and from the view which it gives of Lord Byron's desertion during his residence in Italy; and still more from the light, which it throws upon the state of his feelings and character. The writer himself is apparently unconscious of what he has thus contributed to bring before us. Shelley, who seems to have been almost domesticated with Lord Byron, was drowned by the upsetting of an open boat. His body was found fifteen days afterwards. The following is the relation of Medwin.

'18th August, 1822.—On the occasion of Shelley's melancholy fate I revisited Pisa, and on the day of my arrival learnt that Lord Byron was gone to the seashore, to assist in performing the last offices to his friend. We came to a spot marked by an old and withered trunk of a fir tree; and near it, on the beach, stood a solitary hut covered with reeds. The situation was well calculated for a poet's grave. A few weeks before I had ridden with him and Lord Byron to this very spot, which I afterwards visited more than once. In front was a magnificent extent of the blue and windless Mediterranean, with the Isles of Elba and Gorgona,—Lord Byron's yacht at anchor in the offing; on the other side an

almost boundless extent of sandy wilderness, uncultivated and uninhabited, here and there interspersed in tufts with underwood curved by the sea breeze, and stunted by the barren and dry nature of the soil in which it grew. At equal distances along the coast stood high square towers, for the double purpose of guarding the coast from smuggling, and enforcing the quarantine laws. This view was bounded by an immense extent of the Italian Alps, which are here particularly picturesque from their volcanic and manifold appearances, and which being composed of white marble, give their summits the resemblance of snow.

'As a foreground to this picture appeared as extraordinary a group. Lord Byron and Trelawney were seen standing over the burning pile, with some of the soldiers of the guard; and Leigh Hunt, whose feelings and nerves could not carry him through the scene of horror, lying back in the carriage, the four post horses ready to drop with the intensity of the noonday sun. The stillness of all around was yet more felt by the shrill scream of a solitary curlew, which, perhaps, attracted by the body, wheeled in such narrow circles round the pile, that it might have been struck with the hand, and was so fearless that it could not be driven away. Looking at the corpse, Lord Byron said,

'"Why, that old black silk handkerchief retains its form better than that human body!"

'Scarcely was the ceremony concluded, when Lord Byron, agitated by the spectacle he had witnessed, tried to dissipate, in some degree, the impression of it by his favorite recreation. He took off his clothes, therefore, and swam off to his yacht, which was ridinga few miles distant.' * * *

'The next morning he was perfectly recovered. When I called, I found him sitting in the garden under the shade of some orange trees, with the Countess. They are now always together, and he is become quite domestic. He calls her *Piccinina*, and bestows on her all the pretty diminutive epithets that are so sweet in Italian. His kindness and attention to the Guiccioli have been invariable.' pp. 178—186.

The bad taste of the execution does not much injure the effect of this picture. Misery produces strange companionship. Lord Byron, attending the funeral of one of his few associates, who was still more an outcast from society than himself; the gloomy circumstances of Shelley's death; the solitude of the scene; the commencement of decay in the body, still clothed in the dress worn while in life; Leigh Hunt dissolved in sentimental tears in the back ground, and

Byron himself endeavoring to escape from all thought, braving the melancholy, which must have forced itself upon him; and, the next morning, found 'quite domestic' with the wife of another man who was his mistress.

A few months before the event mentioned in the last extract, Lord Byron received a letter from a Mr Sheppard. It contained a prayer of intercession for him, written in the year 1814, by Mrs Sheppard, which her husband had discovered among her papers, more than two years after her death. This lady was not personally acquainted with Lord Byron; she had only seen him, and had been interested like the rest of the world in his poetry. The circumstances were adapted to affect any one. Lord Byron was touched at once through his vanity and his better feelings. His reply to Mr Sheppard, defective as it is in sentiment and reasoning, is more creditable to him in a moral point of view, than any other composition of his which has been published. We will give it entire.*

'Pisa, December 8, 1821.

'Sir,—I have received your letter.—I need not say that the extract which it contains has affected me, because it would imply a want of all feeling to have read it with indifference. Though I am not quite sure that it was intended for me, yet the date, the place where it was written, with some other circumstances which you mention, render the allusion probable. But for whomsoever it was meant, I have read it with all the pleasure, which can arise from so melancholy a topic. I say *pleasure*, because your brief and simple picture of the life and demeanor of the excellent person whom, I trust, that you will again meet, cannot be contemplated without the admiration due to her virtues, and her pure and unpretending piety. Her last moments were particularly striking; and I do not know, that in the course of reading the story of mankind, and still less in my observations upon the existing portion, I ever met with anything so unostentatiously beautiful! Indisputably, the firm believers in the Gospel have a great advantage over all others, for this simple reason, that if true, they will have their reward hereafter, and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an

* It was originally published in a work entitled *Thoughts chiefly designed as a Preparative or Persuasive to private Devotion*, by John Sheppard. This book we have not seen; but copy the above from the English Monthly Repository, No. 229.

exalted hope through life, without disappointment, since (at the worst for them) 'out of nothing, nothing can arise,' not even sorrow! But a man's creed does not depend upon himself. Who can say, I *will* believe this, that, or the other, and least of all that which he least can comprehend? I have, however, observed, that those who have begun life with extreme faith, have in the end greatly narrowed it, as Chillingworth, Clarke, (who ended as an Arian,) Bayle and Gibbon, (once a Catholic,) and some others; while, on the other hand, nothing is more common than for the early skeptic to end in a firm belief, like Maupertuis and Henry Kirke White. But my business is to acknowledge your letter, and not to make a dissertation. I am obliged to you for your good wishes, and more than obliged by *the extract* from the papers of the beloved object, whose qualities you have so well described in a few words. I can assure you that all the fame, that ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance, would never weigh in my mind against the pure and pious interest, which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my welfare. In this point of view, I would not exchange the prayer of the deceased in my behalf for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon, could such be accumulated upon a living head. Do me at least the justice to suppose that—

Video meliora proboque,

however the *deteriora sequor* may have been applied to my conduct. I have the honor to be your obliged and obedient servant,

'Byron.'

It is melancholy to think of the debasement and inconsistencies of such a mind as Lord Byron's, a mind with such capacities for moral and intellectual excellence. With how much deeper feeling, might he have adopted the words of a less gifted poet—

O gracious God! how far have we
Profaned thy heavenly gift of Poesy?
Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,
Debased to each obscene and impious use.

Before the date of the letter just quoted, he had composed his Cain; and, previously even to that work, he had abandoned himself, in his Don Juan, to a course of writing, which left nothing to be hoped.

Of these works we shall say but little. The world, as has been already remarked, had begun to grow weary of Byron's

monotonous wretchedness; the dark cloud which had enveloped him was dispersing, and no longer hid from view the form and lineaments of a man like other men; the romantic conceptions, which had been entertained concerning him, were assuming a tinge of the ridiculous; his life had been such, and his character had become so deeply marked and disfigured, that much of his former style of sentiment was too obviously incongruous with either; and his powers seem to have been weakened, both by the moral and physical effects of his vices. Their influence tended also to prevent that confidence in the sympathy of others, which was necessary to the successful exertion of his genius. But he lived in the eyes of men, and their gaze was still to be fixed upon himself in some way or another. If he could not be the first of poets, he could be the most unprincipled and the most daring. It was in this state of mind, that he produced his Don Juan and his Cain, and some of the other works of his later years.

His thorough admirers have praised even these. But unless an age of deeper darkness and evil, than has yet been known, is about to settle upon the world, the prevailing sentiments concerning them will soon silence all dissentient voices. His Cain is a poem which has little in it, that is dramatic, except its external form. It is an attack upon the goodness of God, on the ground of the existence of evil. It represents him as the tyrant of the universe, delighting in the parasitical praises of his meaner creatures; but whom all nobler spirits must regard with defiance. It is idle to say, by way of apology, that this attack upon the Divinity is broken up into paragraphs, with the names of Cain and Lucifer prefixed to them; since what has been stated is the only sentiment of the work, unanswered and uncontradicted, to the impression of which everything is made to contribute. It accords but too well with earlier expressions of the feelings of the author. We might justify what has been said, by extracts from the poem; but it would be necessary to quote passages, which no light occasion would excuse one for obtruding upon notice.

We read the first two cantos of Don Juan shortly after their appearance. The mass of buffoonery and profligacy which followed, we had not seen till about to prepare the present article. It was the last product of Byron's mind. The great merit aimed at in the work, is drollery. The

author drolls upon everything; giving, for instance, in the first canto, a funny account of some shipwrecked sailors driven through hunger to devour one of their companions. It is rambling and incoherent, with frequent disregard of grammar and prosody. It furnishes, however, a sort of commentary upon the character and life of its author; for he could not write long without writing about himself; and in this work, his disclosures seem to be more liberal, unguarded, and prosaic, than in any other. In reading it, we may be reminded of what Medwin reports him to have said; 'Why don't you drink, Medwin? Gin and water is the source of all my inspiration.' One might have conjectured, perhaps, that a considerable part of it was written under such inspiration.

This production, left unfinished, was the concluding labor of the literary life of a man, who might, in his old age, have been honored with passionate admiration, and have continued, after death, to pour forth a pure splendor amid the eternal lights of poetry; who might have delighted and ennobled his fellowmen by glorious conceptions and beautiful imaginations; and who might have given all that electric energy to the expression of high and generous sentiments, which was wasted, for the most part, in adding force to the language of selfish melancholy, of misanthropy, or of violent and wicked passions. As it is, we have now to estimate, not what good, but what evil, may be the general result of his writings. There is much of his poetry, it is true, which may be read without injury by a tolerably healthy mind; and there are passages of great strength and great beauty, free from the expression of any wrong sentiment. Nor is there much, which can be seducing to any one in his exhibitions of vice and impiety. He uses no gay coloring. He delights in painting moral disease and insane passions, rather than the loose and voluptuous banquet, which may precede them. Even in the writings of his later days, there is a truth and coarseness in his immorality, which is anything but attractive. But when such a writer as Byron expresses strongly, what he represents as his own emotions and sentiments, there are many who will adopt them, and apply his language to themselves. He has had followers, without doubt, who have affected depravity of which they were not guilty, and have bewailed their sufferings and deso-

lation, with a resolute determination to be miserable. His verses have done something to give a poetic interest to a selfish abandonment of duty; to encourage the indulgence of passions, which, in the real intercourse of life, are merely offensive; and to throw a charm over that sickly melancholy, to which the young are exposed, from too sensitive feelings, from indolence and timidity, and from desires at once too earthly and too romantic. But this is not an evil lasting in its nature. A writer like Byron becomes the founder of a new school of artificial sentiment, which has its day; but which, in time, grows as obsolete as the Euphuism of Lilly, or the gallantry of Mademoiselle de Scuderi, or the affected sensibility of Sterne. Nothing is permanent but nature and truth. The fashions of one age are the ridicule of the next.

Still there is a pestilential atmosphere about the ruins of such a mind. The great injury likely to result from his writings, consists in the circumstance, that a man of powers so extraordinary, should have enlisted himself without shame in the cause of evil; that he should have presented himself before the world to avow his contempt of decency, his depravity, and his impiety; and that doing this, he should have received no harsher repulse from its favor. He has given to the bad the whole countenance of his name. Strongly interesting his fellowmen through the displays of his genius, and, at the same time, rendering himself justly exposed to reprobation by his vices, he has confused and weakened the moral sentiments of his admirers. The effect appears in some of the highly colored eulogies, which followed his death. They have served to mark and to aggravate the evil. But the stream of time is already washing away the foundations of that factitious admiration, of which he has been the object. In another age, with other fashions and prejudices, the character of Byron will be estimated as it ought to be. The men of another age, however, with different subjects of interest from what we have, can hardly be expected to sympathise strongly in the regret, which we may feel, while contemplating the abuse of such powers and such qualities, as he possessed.